

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 36-38 without prejudice or disclaimer.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly for use in applying a sheet of surgical material through an opening to bridge the remote internal termination of the opening, the assembly comprising:

a) a laparoscopic port;

bb) a deployment sleeve for passing down ~~a~~the laparoscopic port;

~~bc) a plunger for location within the sleeve, to extend from ~~the~~a proximal to ~~the~~a distal end thereof;~~

~~cd) a sheet of surgical material which can be folded, or collapsed, for location at and fully within the distal end of the deployment sleeve; and~~

~~de) an actuating means operative to unfold or erect the sheet of surgical material following expulsion of the sheet of surgical material from the distal end of the deployment sleeve through the distal end of the deployment sleeve as a result of longitudinal movement of the plunger within the deployment sleeve;~~

wherein the deployment sleeve is provided with an external flange defining an insertion stop for the deployment sleeve in the laparoscopic port to control the length of insertion of the deployment sleeve in the laparoscopic port.

24. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, including a pulling means operative to apply a pull force to the sheet of surgical material following deployment.

25. (Previously Presented) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 24, wherein the pulling means is a suture.

26. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet of surgical material, in use, is encased and protected within the deployment sleeve during the manipulation procedure to position the sleeve at the termination of the opening after which the sheet of surgical material is expelled by the plunger to be erected to close behind and over the internal area of the opening.

27. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet of surgical material comprises a known-surgically compatible mesh-such as polypropylene, preferably including a PTFE or similar non-stick material on one surface, being the innermost facing surface adjacent the applicator.

28. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 27, wherein the entire sheet of surgical material is wholly of PTFE.

29. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet of surgical material is normally a flat flexible sheet, preferably circular, and includes radial ribs forming more rigid but resilient arms through which, when the sheet of surgical material is forced to a collapsed or folded configuration, the sheet of surgical material is caused to open out to restore the flat form.

30. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 29, wherein the opening out of the sheet of surgical material is effected through the properties of the sheet of surgical material itself.

31. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein opening-unfolding or erection of the sheet of surgical material is effected or assisted through a suture which pulls the sheet of surgical material upward towards the applicator.

32. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet of surgical material includes ribs which have preformed fold creases to facilitate collapse to a predetermined configuration.

33. (Previously Presented) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the sheet of surgical material includes ribs which have a "memory" acting to restore the sheet of surgical material to a flat form.

34. (Currently Amended) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein, in use, after deployment of the sheet of surgical material the opening thereof is effected or assisted by a separate actuating means which may comprise comprising a suture needle, with or without an attached suture, extending through the plunger from the proximal to the distal end of the sleeve and connecting with the sheet of surgical material, the suture being arranged so that a pulling force applied thereto opens the sheet of surgical material.

35. (Previously Presented) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the plunger is provided with a flange to control the position of the plunger in the sleeve.

36-38. (Canceled)

39. (Currently Amended) A combination, for use in laparoscopic surgery, of the applicator assembly of An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23 and said laparoscopic

~~port, wherein the deployment sleeve of the applicator assembly is appropriately dimensioned to pass down the port.~~

40. (Currently Amended) ~~A combination in accordance with claim 39~~ An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 23, wherein the laparoscopic port has a nominal diameter of 5 to 10 mm.

41. (Currently Amended) A combination in accordance with either of claims 39, additionally comprising, for use in laparoscopic surgery, of the applicator assembly of claim 23 and instruments for use in the laparoscopic surgery.

42. (Canceled)

43. (New) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 27, wherein the surgically compatible mesh comprises polypropylene.

44. (New) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 43, wherein the sheet of surgical material further comprises a non-stick material on an innermost surface adjacent the applicator.

45. (New) An applicator assembly in accordance with claim 29, wherein the sheet of surgical material is circular.